

THE DIAMOND BUTTON

FROM THE DIARY OF A LAWYER AND THE NOTE BOOK OF A REPORTER.

By BARCLAY NORTH.

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CHAPTER VII.
A DECEITFUL CLIENT.

left as a whole it was more than enough for Annie and myself.

"He studied law and was admitted to the bar," said the man, "but, failing to get practice, he went into the real estate business."

"Had your son no very intimate friends?"

"Yes, one; but he is in China now and has been for an year."

"Was your son engaged to any young lady or attentive to any one?"

"None that I know of," he replied.

The sister confirmed this statement eagerly. It was evident that both were jealous of the supposititious young lady.

The young lawyer mused a moment.

"What name shall I give you?"

"My name is Ashgrove," he replied.

"Witherpoon?" I never heard the name before," replied the mother. "Did you, Annie?"

"No, I never did."

"Nor a person by the name of Ashgrove?" continued the lawyer.

"No," said both together.

"Never knew or heard of a young lady named Flora Ashgrove?"

"Never," said the mother.

"The name has a familiar sound," said the girl wonderingly. "Is she not a famous young lady of this city whose name is in the papers frequently?"

The lawyer smiled and answered, "Yes."

"Stop!" cried the girl suddenly. "I recollect, once when my brother was a child, and a letter fell from the pocket signed 'Flora Ashgrove.' I handed it to him and he said: 'An invitation to a dinner I was to last week from the customers.' Do you have ladies for customers?" I asked, and he said: "Quite frequently, but this lady writes for her uncle, who has been one of my best customers."

"Has been?" queried the lawyer.

"That is the way he spoke. I remember, for it conveyed the idea to me he was no longer. But why do you ask these questions?"

"It is a matter of no great importance," said the lawyer, seeing the interest he had aroused. "I called at the house of Mr. Witherpoon, who is doubtless the uncle referred to by your brother, on the day following the murder. He seemed to be much shocked at the murder, and said she was acquainted with Mr. Templeton. In looking at this matter and in trying to help you, I am glad to know that you are so interested in the case. There is no more significance in the question concerning her than in the question concerning the man who was killed."

"But," he continued, "I have one piece of advice to give you and which I must urge and respectfully press, and that is that you take immediate steps with regard to your son's business and property. In that way you may come upon relations you little dream of now."

"What should we do?" asked the sister.

"I believe, madam, all that is known of the case is that the man was killed. He was not particularly quick. The police give us no satisfaction or hope. We have no friends in the city—we are quite alone. But we thought that as you have been a witness of the terrible deed we would call upon you to ask if there was anything you saw that has not been made public."

The helplessness and the innocence of the two women, impelled by love for a son and brother, and the knowledge that they were wholly untrained, touched Ashgrove; he felt a boundless pity for them, and he was surprised at it, for his sympathies were not particularly quick.

"I am aware the police authorities are completely mystified, and now have the theory that Mr. Templeton was attacked under the impression he was some one else."

"That is what the detectives told us," said the mother; "but it is not awful that in a crowded city a man can be so killed without reason?"

"The case has been surrounded with mystery from the beginning," replied Ashgrove, gravely. "Mr. Templeton's life in the city has been carefully guarded, and nothing elicited to suggest an enemy that could end in murder. His life was thoroughly reputable, honorable, upright and virtuous."

The eyes of the two women brightened for his words.

"Perhaps you would permit me to ask you some questions?"

"Oh, please do," cried the sister. "We don't mind to say or tell and no one has helped us."

Holbrook thought if he would but continue to look upon him in that appealing manner he would never want to stop trying to help him.

"In the first place, Mr. Templeton's father is dead, is he not?"

"Yes, he died fifteen years ago."

"Do you not live in this city?"

"No, we have always lived near Plainfield, New Jersey."

"Have you any relatives?"

"None that we know of. My husband was an English gentleman, who came to this country when quite young, and with his uncle. The uncle died a year after, and Mr. Templeton, who had come to Plainfield, married me. He bought the place where we live, and he was a very successful man. He died from injuries received while conducting an enterprise."

"On your side have you no relatives?"

"No," replied Mrs. Templeton. "My mother died in giving me birth; shortly after my father, whose name was Carroll Weston, went to Philadelphia, leaving me to the care of my mother's sister, my aunt. After living there a year or two he went abroad on business and died there. Some years after my uncle, when I lived, heard that he had come again in Philadelphia, but that was never verified. Both my aunt and uncle are dead; they had no children."

"What disposition was made of his property?"

"He had no one to dispose of except his personal effects, and while uncle was satisfied as to his death, so much difficulty surrounded the obtaining of information that he made no effort to secure it—it amounted to so little."

"Had he no relatives?"

"Yes, a brother who left home young and died before he was of age; and a sister—a maiden lady who died in Philadelphia ten years ago. She left a small property to Annie here."

"Her grand niece?"

"Yes, she was very fond of her."

"Was her property inherited?"

"Yes, from her father."

"Why then did not your father have property?"

"He did; but he lost it in speculation. The only thing he had left was a small property to Annie here."

"You must have left some property to your last surviving son, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did. I left him a small property to Annie here."

"What was the property?"

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you are now counsel for the sister. I want a description of that suit of clothes the man wore who knifed Templeton. Of course if I asked to see it I could see enough, but I'd have the whole lot of them on my heels."

"And you want me to get the suit for you?"

"No, but I want you to become thoroughly acquainted with it."

"To what end?"

"I want to buy a suit just like it."

"Pshaw."

"You think I am fooling?"

"I don't think it. I know it."

"Holbrook, you pass in this city for being one of the ablest of the young lawyers, but you can be an awful stupid fool at times."

"Thank you."

"I mean it. Can't you see what I'm driving at?"

"No, I'm blind if I can."

"Well, I'll tell you in a little way. The man who knifed Templeton wore a cheap suit of clothes which he had just purchased from a cheap dealer in this city. It was a suit of the latest fashion, and the color I can put on here, replied the lawyer.

"That can be arranged," said the official.

"Then I want to see it once to match the stones."

"That also can be arranged."

While the jeweler was making notes of the suit, Holbrook began a close examination of the make and style of the clothes. Having satisfied himself as to that, he turned the trousers wrong side out, and found a place where the cloth had been widely turned over at a seam. It gave a complete idea of the pattern of the cloth.

"I want to see it once to match the stones."

"That also can be arranged."

The two retired to a corner and conversed earnestly. Holbrook was persistent and energetic. The official yielded.

"A pair of shears from the high official's desk did the work."

When the jeweler intimated that he had finished his work of examination, Holbrook looked at his watch; it was 5 o'clock.

"What will be the cost of these buttons?"

The jeweler named what he thought would be the sum.

"I'll give you four times that amount if you will deliver them at my office at 10 o'clock, day after tomorrow."

"I shall have to wait night and day then, won't you?"

"That's what I offer you four times the sum you name. The affair is urgent."

"They will be done."

Holbrook then went to Delmonico's, where he found Bryan awaiting him.

"Let us get some refreshment where we can talk without being heard," said Holbrook.

They took the corner of Twenty-sixth street and Broadway.

Thus he sat with his back to the corner.

The waiter was enabled to survey the whole room and could note who entered.

After they had given their orders, Holbrook handed Tom the slip of cloth.

"A piece of the suit worn by the murderer."

"You are prompt. Are you sure it is the same?"

"Sure. I cut it off myself."

"Good. Have you a description of the button?"

"No, I have done better."

"What?"

"I shall have, day after tomorrow, a pair of them—a complete imitation of the buttons, so close you could not tell 'tether from which.'"

"You are an angel. Good, this is getting on with a vengeance. Here comes the waiter with our soup."

While they were dining Holbrook told Tom of his singular interview with Flora Ashgrove.

Holbrook was deeply interested.

He listened without interjecting a remark, only to caution Holbrook to suspend his narrative when the waiter or some one else approached too closely.

When it was finished he was thoughtful.

Finally he said:

"You should have told this to the coroner. But I am glad you did not. You ought to tell this to your high official, but don't show her that you are so interested in the case."

"What do you think of it all?" asked Holbrook.

"It is a queer mess, and I think it deeper than ever. There's a mystery behind that murder. That girl thinks she knows who did it, and she is afraid for her life. Questioning her would do no good; nor would it have done when you saw her, although she was then in the hands of the high official. After all, she said nothing; as you say, it was all in her manner. I don't think as much of the button as I did."

They lit cigars, smoked and listened to the music until the curtain finally fell.

"What a night!" said Holbrook, "in a few minutes we'll know whether we have deprived ourselves of comfortable seats during the third act or not."

Holbrook, who was in a bad humor, replied:

"I'm sure you did. She won't go up there; she would think it bad form."

"Bah! it's bad form, so her set would say, to be seen at a theatre at this time of the evening. I don't think she would go."

"Hush," he continued, "there she goes now," as the brightly lighted elevator glided up. "Come, let us go up. No, wait until they have had time to be seated."

They waited a moment or two, and then ascended the stairs to the roof. At first they did not see the party, but carefully proceeding they came upon them hidden behind a large fire escape.

"They are of value," quickly responded Bryan, "great value; all the same, they may track the murderer. It is by no means certain that Miss Ashgrove's suspicions are correct. She may be on a false trail. But, after all, she would not suspect any one of committing the deed unless there was a reason existing for doing it. Now what is that reason? That is what we must try to find out."

"But how? The way is dark."

"Oh, I have some more tangled skeins than this country was discovered. The great point is to keep on the right track. I am retained to look after the dead brother's property, and see to closing up his business."

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